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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s): _____

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☐ Classify as _____ ☐ Extend as _____ ☐ Downgrade to _____

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

MAR 22 1977

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Secretary has asked me to reply to your letter of February 23 concerning two Argentine witnesses who appeared before your subcommittee in September.

It is our understanding that about December 7 an Argentine Federal Judge indicted Gustavo Adolfo Roca and Lucio Garzon Maceda under a 1951 law which makes it a crime for an Argentine citizen to propose or recommend political or economic sanctions against the Republic of Argentina. The judicial action ordered the arrest of Messrs. Garzon and Roca, and declared them "in rebellion and contempt of court" because they did not obey unspecified orders to present themselves before the court. The law provides for prison terms between five and twenty-five years and for permanent loss of civil rights.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, Charles W. Bray, expressed our concern over the indictment of Messrs. Garzon and Roca to senior Argentine officials during his visit to Buenos Aires in December. Mr. Bray was assured by the Minister of Interior that only the act of proposing or recommending sanctions against Argentina by an Argentine national was prohibited by law, that testimony alone or even criticism of the Argentine government would not be punished, and that Argentine citizens would remain free to testify before Congress. Argentine officials stressed that criticism of Argentina is not illegal. What is illegal is calling upon a foreign government to take sanctions against Argentina.

The Honorable

Donald M. Fraser, Chairman,

Subcommittee on International

Organizations,

Committee on International Relations,

House of Representatives.

As far as we know, the only other case under the 1951 law arose in 1966 when a stevedore leader in the Port of Buenos Aires called for a boycott of Argentina by similar unions in other countries. We do not know whether the union official was convicted.


We are sending copies of this exchange of correspondence to our Embassy in Buenos Aires so that it may add its commentary if possible. We will write to you again if we learn anything further.




I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,



Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations


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